

descriptions of character In which satirists and historians indulge so much. It is by rejecting what is natural that satirists and historians produce these striking characters. Their great object generally is to ascribe to every man as many contradictory qualities as possible : and this is an object easily attained. By judicious selection and judicious exaggeration, the intellect and the disposition of any human being might be described as being made up of nothing but startling contrasts. If the dramatist attempts to create a being answering to one of these descriptions^ he fails because he reverses an imperfect analytical process. He produces, not a man, but a personified epigram. Very eminent writers have fallen into this snare.¹

Macaulay here couples together historians and satirists, as if it were natural and correct that historians should use the same method as satirists. But the truth is that in drawing characters the historian ought to endeavour to imitate the method of the dramatist. He should note externals but pierce through them. He should not heighten contradictions, but should try to discover their cause and explain them.

Political prejudice, exaggeration, and want of real insight combine to produce the misrepresentations of certain historical characters to be found in Macaulay's pages. Three cases are chosen here to exhibit his failings. All three have been exhaustively treated in Paget's *New Examen*,²

Macaulay styles Dundee 'a soldier of

distinguished
courage and professional skill, but rapacious
and profane*
of violent temper and of obdurate heart/ ³
Another passage
refers to his * seared conscience and
adamantine heart/*
Then are recapitulated the crimes by which
he and others

¹ Essays, i. 334.

²Included in Paradoxes and Puzzles,

* I, 492 (iv).

* I, 493-